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SUBJECT: JORDAN: JANUARY 8 MEDIA REACTION TO GAZA SITUATION

¶1. SUMMARY: Beneath photos of Palestinian family members grieving over civilians killed in Gaza, Jordan's major media outlets led today's coverage with news of the Israeli security cabinet's decision to extend its military offensive into urban areas. Inside papers were also choked with paid advertisements announcing new demonstrations, most notably that of the Islamist community's "festival of anger." Commentators ran with King Abdullah's conspiracy warning of yesterday, anticipating political moves in the coming days and weeks. END SUMMARY.

¶2. All major newspapers published today and other Jordan-based news outlets maintained singular focus on events surrounding the conflict in Gaza, employing banner headlines, large color photos of grieving family members, and extensive details over several inside pages. Coverage led with the Israeli security cabinet's decision to continue the military offensive into Gaza's urban areas, highlighting Israeli threats to destroy the city of Rafah. All papers also focused on King Abdullah's telephone conversation with the Moroccan monarch about developments in Gaza, and conflicting reports on Israeli and Hamas reactions to the French-Egyptian ceasefire initiative.

¶3. All major newspapers today carried multiple advertisements by different parties calling for public participation in tomorrow's "Day of Anger" in the form of demonstrations in many parts of Jordan. The papers published a half-page advertisement paid for by Jordan's Islamist community inviting the public to a "festival of anger" in the Tabarbour area tomorrow. The Jordan Press Association paid for another ad inviting its members to a protest at its premises on Saturday. Labor unions and opposition political parties paid for ads inviting the public to a demonstration today in Amman's Shmeisani district. Orange and Zain telecom companies paid for full-page ads urging citizens to make charitable donations via SMS. Tkiyet Um Ali, Normina Television, and Mazaj Radio announced they would host "a day of solidarity with Gaza." The Society for Medical Assistance to Palestinians urged people to donate "before it is too late."

¶4. Major newspapers also carried many other advertisements expressing moral support for Palestinians in Gaza. A local furniture shop named Midas paid for a large, black-shrouded ad declaring "Our Hearts Are With You Gaza." The family of George Habash, the late PFLP leader, paid for an announcement in the obituary section of Jordan's two largest independent dailies, Al-Ghad and Al-Arab Al-Yawm, of a memorial mass on Saturday in Amman's Sweifieh neighborhood. The announcement noted that the first anniversary of the passing of Habash is coinciding with the "brutal Israeli attack against Gaza," and hailed the "legendary steadfastness" and the "heroic resistance of the people of Gaza." On the same note, Al-Arab Al-Yawm carried a report about local artists' forms of solidarity with the Gazans, including the reported planting of headstones near the Israeli embassy in Amman for each Gazan killed.

¶5. All papers reported on a meeting between a delegation of political and civil society figures from Jordan and Hamas political supremo Khaled Misha'al in Damascus the day before yesterday. Reports stated the meeting was an expression of support for the people of Gaza and a protest against Israel's aggression. Reports

focused on Misha'al's "expression of appreciation for Jordan's stand and assistance to the Palestinians."

16. Editorial Commentary

-- "Do Not Underestimate the Warnings"

Columnist Jamil Nimri in the January 8 edition of the independent Arabic daily Al-Ghad comments on the King's warning of a "conspiracy" against the Palestinian people. He writes, "The truth is that the conspiracy has a central feature of an Israel backed and supported by the most extreme and Zionist circles in the United States. This is clear in the Washington Post article written by former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton, in which he talks about bypassing the two-state solution and dividing the remains of the Palestinian homeland between Egypt and Jordan.... Meanwhile, there are some who are yelling about igniting the West Bank front. This is as if the West Bank did do so during the second armed Intifada and has not paid the full price for that.... Indeed, the West Bank and Gaza are together on fire and this will not change the balance of powers but will rather open the road to literally completing the scenario of destruction, which would lead to "the three-state" solution, i.e. dividing the remains between Israel, Jordan, and Egypt. Nimri concludes, "Jordan is now warning against this very conspiracy and, hence, any political project to end the aggression against Gaza must take confronting this scheme into consideration."

-- "The Israeli Conspiracy: A Danger That Goes Beyond Worries"

Managing editor Fahed Khitan in the January 8 edition of the independent, opposition Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm observes, "The

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King's statements to Al-Jazeera channel the day before last go beyond all fears and worries, reaching the point of admitting the existence of 'an Israeli agenda' and an Arab and international plan to swiftly move to stop this agenda.... As a first step, officials must present further explanations to the King's statements vis-`-vis the nature of the Israeli agenda as it is certain that in his statements to Al-Jazeera, the King did not rely on press reports or studies conducted by research centers but rather on facts and documented information provided to his majesty by the state institutions.... The King referred to an Arab and Western plan, the details of which we await in the coming days. However, there is a need for a domestic plan and an effective role played by the Jordanian social and political powers on all levels in the battle to defend Jordan and the Palestinian people's right to their independent state.... Maintaining the solidarity of the domestic front is the decisive element in confronting the Zionist scheme. Achieving this objective requires thought about political moves at more than one level, foremost of which is political reform, enhancing the role of the state and its institutions, adhering to the policy of diversifying regional options as well as not hesitating to get into a confrontation with any party that collaborates with the Israeli scheme.... On the Arab level, Jordan should decide its stance towards the issue of an Arab summit and announce its approval of holding it because the case requires Arab support in this fateful battle."

-- "The Conspiracy Against Palestine and Jordan Together"

Columnist Oraib Rantawi in the January 8 edition of the government-aligned, pro-Palestinian Arabic daily Ad-Dustour asserts, "The war on Gaza has finished off the already fragile and exhausted Palestinian Authority. The war on Gaza will enter its fourteenth day after tomorrow while President Abbas' term would have ended [by then]. The war on Gaza has finished off the Annapolis track and has cut off the road to the option of an independent Palestinian state. The war on Gaza has opened the appetite of John Bolton to talk about 'the three-state' solution instead of the 'the two-state for two peoples' solution. Those three states are Israel, Jordan, and Egypt, which is a 'humiliating' return to the pre-1967 situation minus what Israel will take for itself from the West Bank territories and the blood, dignity, and rights of the people.... Those are the features of the conspiracy against the Palestinian

people and their future, which requires all of us to be responsible, brave, and alert in standing against its objectives. And because this is an exceptional conspiracy in its objectives and a dirty one in the way it is being implemented, the response to it also needs to be exceptional.... This should include a reassessment of the relationship with Israel and putting the latter not just in the category of 'threats to the national security' but at the top of list of such threats. The Jordanian-Israeli peace - in the form of a treaty, embassies and arrangements - is no longer a wall that protects our national security.... A state that has decided to build its deterrent capacity over the bodies of the children and women of Lebanon and Palestine and has officially and finally announced that it stepped out of the humanity club and positioned itself inside the Fascism and Nazism club - in the form of a state, an ideology, and an entity - cannot be trusted with its promises, obligations, and commitments."

-- "The Occupation Gangs Resort to Prevarication and Delay"

The main editorial in today's Ad-Dustour opines, "At a time when the Zionist gangs are claiming their acceptance of the Egyptian initiative and are sending their delegation to Cairo to discuss it with Egyptian officials, we find them resorting to the escalation of the heinous aggression and to warning the people of Rafah to flee their city to pave the way for its bombardment. This affirms that they are resorting to prevarication and playing for time so as to achieve their goals of striking at the resistance and getting the Palestinian people to kneel down.... This puts the ball in the Arab order's court for the second time, perhaps prompting it to stand up and make a bold unanimous decision that would save the people of Gaza from the holocaust and reconsider relations with the Israeli entity after it has been proven that it is an entity not any different from the Nazi entity except by name."

-- "So That We Would Not Lose the Round"

Former Information Minister Saleh Qallab in today's edition of the leading, government-owned Arabic daily Al-Rai reasons, "Because there is an Arab foreign ministerial delegation in New York fighting bravely to pass a draft resolution that was unanimously approved during the recent meeting in Cairo, there is no need for any new Arab draft resolutions or initiatives that could be exploited - and some of which have already been exploited - to delay and postpone the issuance of an anticipated UN Security Council resolution in order to give the Israelis more time to complete their war against Gaza.... Any Arab or Palestinian party has the right to voice its opinion and defend it with the need to always take into consideration that what exists on the ground reflects itself over the bargaining table. [But any] further delay and procrastination,

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and the continued aggression in such an excessively harsh and heinous manner would cause the Arabs to lose more cards from the little cards they have."

BEECROFT